

# ***Executive Summary***



**IDAHO**

# Overview

The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation produced the 2003-2007 Idaho Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Plan (SCORTP), under the direction of the Idaho SCORTP Task Force. The Task Force is comprised of representatives from public and private organizations statewide with interest in outdoor recreation. The plan, which is required by the National Park Service (NPS) in order to maintain eligibility for participation in the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program, is produced every five years. NPS requires certain elements in the plan, including a statewide assessment of outdoor recreation supply and demand, public involvement and a wetlands component.

For the 2003-2007 SCORTP, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation surveyed Idahoans statewide to determine their participation in a wide range of recreational activities, and to get a sense of the public's priorities on issues related to outdoor recreation. In addition, staff reviewed other statewide studies related to outdoor recreation conducted during the past five years.

## Findings

The 2002 Idaho Outdoor Recreation Survey asked respondents to rank 19 issues in outdoor recreation on their importance. Idahoans ranked the following as their top ten issues:

1. Protecting water quality
2. Protecting existing access to public lands
3. Protecting natural resources on public lands
4. Educating youth about natural resources and the environment
5. Controlling invasive species
6. Educating adults about natural resources and the environment
7. Providing recreation safety instruction to youth
8. Providing outdoor recreation education for youth
9. Providing access for the disabled
10. Rehabilitating outdoor recreation facilities

- Support for outdoor recreation education is very strong among Idahoans. Four of their top ten issues were education-related. This supports findings from earlier studies, namely the annual BSU Public Policy Survey and the 2000 Idaho Recreational User Survey sponsored by the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.

- Idaho's population out-participated the nation in 19 of 28 comparable outdoor recreation activities. Rates were about the same in five categories and lower in four.

- While walking was the most popular outdoor recreation activity in both Idaho and the nation, only 64.3 percent of Idahoans walk for exercise or pleasure, compared with 83.8 percent nationally.

- Idahoans hiked more often than the national average—55.3 percent of Idahoans hiked at least once in the past year, compared with 33.4 percent nationally.

- Other recreational activities where Idaho's participation lagged behind that of the nation were windsurfing, sailing and photography—at least partially explained by our lack of an ocean.

- Idahoans participate much more in wildlife activities than the rest of the nation, especially when it comes to hunting. We hunt big game four times as often. Waterfowl hunting in Idaho is nearly six times as popular as it is nationally. Non-consumptive wildlife activities, such as viewing animals, was also higher than the national average.

- Horseback riding is almost twice the national average—Idaho has a population of 234,000 horses, and 55 percent of equine use in Idaho is related to recreational pursuits (pleasure riding, packing/ hunting and endurance trail riding).

- According to a national study, the Rocky Mountain Region will see a demand for water-based recreation grow faster than population growth in the next several years. Additionally, the region will need resources for biking, picnicking, walking, camping and family gatherings in coming years to meet population projections.

- According to the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and the Centers for Disease Control, nearly 60 percent of Idahoans are overweight to the point they are risking their health. The same sources say that 21 percent of Idahoans are at risk for a lack of exercise.

- While boating fatalities nationally and in Idaho have dropped dramatically in recent years because of law enforcement efforts and education campaigns, little effort has been placed on reducing death and injuries for snowmobilers, or ATV and off-highway motorbike riders. The fatality rate for ATVs per 100,000 registered machines in Idaho is 17, compared with 2.45 for boats.

## **Outdoor Recreation Facilities Inventory**

In past years, several attempts were made to create a database of outdoor recreation facilities statewide. Each effort to do so was largely independent of previous efforts. For the 2003-2007 SCORTP, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation contacted recreation providers statewide to gather basic inventory information, then IDPR's Outdoor Recreation Data Center (ORDC), combined those responses with data gathered in 1998 to create the most up-to-date inventory available. Providers



can now update their information at their convenience through a web interface. They will be reminded to do so at least once a year.

In addition to counting various outdoor recreation facilities, the new database will describe the condition of those facilities and track future needs as determined by site managers.

## **Wetlands Database**

Since 1992, much work has gone into compiling data on Idaho wetlands. However, the data are very difficult to access because little has been computerized. The wetlands goal of the 2003-2007 SCORTP is to compile that data into a computer database during the next five years. With the exception of certain sites that have been acquired by public entities in the past five years, the wetlands preservation priority has not changed since publication of the 1993 Idaho Wetland Conservation Prioritization Plan.

## **Identified Goals**

Based on studies included within, and on the expertise of its members, the Idaho SCORTP Task Force developed thirteen goals for 2003 to 2007. A set of objectives for each goal is contained latter in the report. The identified goals, which are not prioritized, are:

**Implement a Revised Strategic Planning Process**

**Develop a program for implementation of ongoing, reliable and valid outdoor recreation research**

**Protect Existing Access to Outdoor Recreation**

**Provide a Full Range of Outdoor Recreation Opportunities that recognize the multiplicity of activities in Idaho**

**Create an Idaho Outdoor Recreation and Natural Resources Education Initiative**

**Diversify Funding for Outdoor Recreation**

**Promote a Unified Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Marketing Program**

**Recognize the Importance of Transportation Planning in Project Development**

**Integrate Historic, Cultural and Heritage Opportunities in Outdoor Recreation and Tourism**

**Continue the Promotion of Outdoor Recreation Partnerships**

## **Develop, Maintain and Promote High Quality Fish and Wildlife Recreational Opportunities**

## **Balance Outdoor Recreation Opportunities with Sensitivity to the Environment**

# **Implementation**

The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation has created a new program dedicated to continuously assessing the needs of recreationists and making those needs known to recreation providers so they can be met. The Outdoor Recreation Data Center (ORDC) will create a body of research on changing public values, and provide the public and land managers with continuous access to critical information on outdoor recreation in Idaho.

IDPR will implement SCORTP through the creation of ORDC. The Center's coordinator will have primary responsibility for that implementation.

In a nutshell, the Outdoor Recreation Data Center will find out what recreationists need through research and public involvement, and assist public agencies in fulfilling those needs. ORDC will give Idahoans a voice in proposed actions affecting their recreation, and offer agencies reliable outdoor recreation data. SCORTP will become an ongoing process to expand our understanding of recreation needs and resources statewide.

## **Needs Assessment and Public Involvement**

The ORDC approach to needs assessment will be three-fold. First, the center will conduct an annual statewide survey to determine the recreational activities in which Idahoans participate or would like to participate. Second, ORDC will survey recreationists by category to further refine understanding of their needs. For instance, ORDC will conduct an assessment specifically for urban recreation needs, and survey recreationists by activity: snowmobilers, hikers, mountain bikers, campers, etc. Third, ORDC will take research results and conduct a series of annual recreation forums where staff can speak informally with local recreationists about their needs. While these will not result in quantifiable data, they will give staff a sense of recreation needs geographically, alert ORDC to emerging issues/activities and help IDPR better understand how well its efforts are meeting needs.

At the recreation forums the public will see presentations and static displays on what recreation providers at all levels are planning for their region in the coming year. They will also have the opportunity to comment in a formal way, using needs assessment survey data as a starting point, and talk with recreation staff informally in order to make their needs known.

The Idaho ORDC website will complement the recreation forums by serving as a statewide focal point for public information and comment. The site will include links to current proposed actions by type and geographical area to make it easier to provide feedback on outdoor recreation issues. It will also include a centralized method for the public to provide comments

about recreation issues, facilities and services regardless of the managing provider.

### **Recreation Provider Assessments**

Going hand in glove with the public needs assessment, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation will query recreation providers at all levels annually to keep abreast of changing recreation patterns and to uncover developing issues. The assessments will include at least one annual meeting of major providers followed by a mail-out and web-based survey of all identified providers in the state. After identifying needs, issues and opportunities, the providers will be asked to rank them. A compilation of that data will help ORDC identify its annual planning focus.

### **Recreation Inventory**

ORDC has created a database of recreation opportunities in Idaho. Over the coming months, that database will be refined by working with providers such as the Forest Service, BLM, US Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Fish and Game Department, county and city governments and school districts. The database will track not just inventory, but the condition of recreation facilities and the need for additional facilities.

### **Measurement**

The Idaho SCORTP Task Force will meet at least quarterly to assess progress and compile narratives on projects that work toward SCORTP goals or objectives. As each year draws to a close, the compiled narratives will be reported on the ORDC website alongside a “scorecard” representing percentage of goal or objective completion. In addition, the information will be contained in an annual SCORTP report available in a printed format. At the end of every five-year period, the annual report will include all elements required in a SCORTP document, which will signal the start of the next planning period.

### **Improving SCORTP**

The ORDC, which has responsibility for implementing this plan and developing the next SCORTP conducted a program evaluation of past Idaho SCORTP plans (included herein). The following recommendations came from that study:

- Establish methods for maintaining consistency from plan to plan in order to better evaluate the effectiveness of SCORTP efforts.
- Establish interim measurement of goals and objectives.
- Include an evaluation of progress on goals and objectives in each future SCORTP.
- Improve outdoor recreation research methods.
- Establish ongoing outdoor recreation databases.
- Create an Internet presence for Idaho’s SCORTP.